Changes in Depression and Anxiety Among Youth in the Context of a Healthy Relationships Program

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ABSTRACT

Statement of the problem: As part of evaluation of the Healthy Relationships Plus Program (HRPP) in Canada, this study sought to identify individual and group-level predictors of depression and anxiety at pre-test, and rate of change from pre-test to post-test.

Method: A total of 700 youth (ages 11-21) participated in a 15-week program in 2014/2015 academic year within various classroom or community settings. Overall, 70 groups were included in analyses from four Canadian provinces. In small groups, youth engaged in interactive, skill-building activities, discussed mental health issues and how to build healthy relationships. Youth completed pre- and post-program questionnaires to assess demographics, attitudes and behaviors related to violence, bullying, drug use, and mental health. Depression and anxiety were assessed by the Depression and Anxiety scales of DASS-

RESULTS

Three-level Multilevel Modeling (MLM):

- Level 1: change in depression and anxiety over time, from pre- to post-program
- Level 2: participants’ gender predict changes in depression and anxiety from pre- to post-program
- Level 3: group-level variables predict changes in depression and anxiety from pre- to post-program.

Anxiety subscales of DASS (DASS-A2) and Depression subscales of DASS (DASS-D2) were analyzed using multilevel modeling (MLM).

Depression and anxiety rates varied significantly as a function of group mean age. These findings did not depend on a community versus school program setting and risk status of groups as measured by aggregate binge drinking.

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